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GOV. HAMMOND'S LETTERS--NO. 3.

ADDRESS TO THOMAS CLARKSON THE ENGLISH ABOLITIONIST.

Physical and moral condition of southern slaves compared with English laborers.—Schemes of abolition—"moral suasion"—force—competition of free labor.—The grand upshot of West India emancipation.

Perhaps a few general facts will best illustrate the treatment this race receives at our hands. It is acknowledged that it increases at least as rapidly as the white. I believe it is an established principle, that population thrives in proportion to its comforts. But when it is considered that these people are not recruited by immigration from abroad as the whites are, and that they are usually settled on our richest and least healthy lands, the fact of their equal comparative increase and greater longevity, outweighs a thousand Abolition falsehoods, in favor of the leniency and providence of our management of them. It is also admitted that there are incomparably fewer cases of insanity and suicide among them than among the whites. The fact is, that among the slaves of the African race these things are almost wholly unknown. However frequently suicide may have been among those brought from Africa, I can say that in my time I cannot remember to have known or heard of a single instance of deliberate self-destruction, and but one of suicide at all.—As to insanity, I have seen but one permanent case of it, and that twenty years ago. It cannot be doubted that among three millions of people there must be some insane and some suicides; but I will venture to say that more cases of both occur annually among every hundred thousand of the population of Great Britain, than among all our slaves. Can it be possible, then, that they exist in that state of abject misery, goaded by constant injuries, outraged in their affections and worn down with hardships, which the Abolitionists depict, and so many ignorant and thoughtless persons religiously believe?

With regard to the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children, nothing can be more untrue than the inferences drawn from what is so constantly harped on by Abolitionists. Some painful instances perhaps may occur. Very few that can be prevented. It is and always has been an object of prime consideration with our slaveholders to keep families together. Negroes are themselves both perverse and comparatively indifferent about this matter. It is a singular trait, that they almost invariably prefer forming connexions with slaves belonging to other masters, and at some distance. It is therefore impossible to prevent separations sometimes, by the removal of one owner, his death, or failure, and dispersion of his property. In all such cases, however, every reasonable effort is made to keep the parties together, if they desire it. And the negroes forming these connexions, knowing the chances of their premature dissolution, rarely complain more than we all do of the inevitable strokes of fate. Sometimes it happens that a negro prefers to give up his family, rather than separate from his master. I have known such instances. As to wilfully selling off a husband or wife or child, I believe it is rarely, very rarely done, except when some offence has been committed demanding "transportation." At sales of estates and even at sheriffs' sales, they are always, if possible, sold in families. On the whole, notwithstanding the migratory character of the population, I believe there are more families among our slaves, who have lived and died together without losing a single member from their circle, except by the process of nature, and in the enjoyment of constant, uninterrupted communion, than have flourished in the same space of time and among the same number of civilized people in modern times. And to sum up all, if pleasure is correctly defined to be the absence of pain—which, so far as the great body of mankind is concerned, is undoubtedly its true definition—I believe our slaves are the happiest three millions of human beings on whom the sun shines. Into their Eden is coming Satan in the guise of an Abolitionist.

As regards their religious condition, it is well known that a majority of the communicants of the Methodist and Baptist churches of the south are colored. Almost everywhere they have precisely the same opportunities of attending worship that the whites have, and besides, special occasions for themselves exclusively, which they prefer. In many places not so accessible to clergymen; in ordinary, missionaries are sent, and mainly supported by their masters, for the particular benefit of the slaves. There are none I imagine who may not, if they like, hear the gospel preached at least once a month—most of them twice a month, and very many every week. In our thinly settled country the whites fare no better. But in addition to this, on the plantations of any size the slaves who have joined the church are formed into a class, at the head of which is placed one of their number, acting as deacon or leader, who is also sometimes a licensed preacher. This class assembles for religious exercises weekly, semi-weekly, or oftener, if the members choose. In some parts also Sunday schools for blacks are established, and bible classes are orally instructed by discreet and pious persons.—Now where will you find a laboring population possessed of greater religious advantages than these? Not in London, I am sure, where it is known that your churches, chapels, and religious meeting houses, of all sorts, cannot contain one half of the inhabitants.

I have admitted, without hesitation, what it would be untrue and profitless to deny, that the slaveholder is responsible to the world for the humane treatment of his fellow-beings whom God placed in his hands. I think it would be only fair for you to admit, what is equally undeniable, that every man in independent circumstances, all the world over, and every government, is to the same extent responsible to the whole human family, for the condition of the poor and laboring classes in their own country and around them, wherever they may be placed, to whom God has denied the advantages he has given themselves. If so, it would naturally seem the duty of true humanity and rational philanthropy to devote their time and labor, their thoughts, writings, and charity, first to the objects placed as it were under their own immediate charge. And it must be regarded as a clear evasion and sinful neglect of this cardinal duty, to pass from those whose destitute situation they can plainly see, minutely examine, and efficiently relieve, to enquire after the condition of others in no way entrusted to their care, to exaggerate evils of which they cannot be cognizant, to expand all their sympathies and exhaust all their energies on these remote objects of their unnatural, not to say dangerous, benevolence; and finally, to calumniate, denounce, and endeavor to excite the indignation of the world against their unoffending fellow creatures for not hastening under their dictation to redress wrongs which are stoutly and truthfully denied, while they themselves go but little farther in alleviating those chargeable on them than openly and unblushingly to acknowledge them. There may be indeed a sort of merit in doing so much as to make an acknowledgment, but it must be very modest if it expects appreciation.

Now I affirm that in Great Britain the poor and laboring classes of your own race and color, not only your fellow beings, but your *fellow citizens*, are more miserable and degraded, morally and physically, than our slaves; to be elevated to the actual condition of whom, would be to these *your fellow citizens* a most glorious act of *emancipation.* And I also affirm, that the poor and laboring classes of our older free States would not be in a much more enviable condition but for our slavery. One of their own Senators has declared in the United States Senate, "that the repeal of the tariff would reduce New England to a howling wilderness." And the American tariff is neither more nor less than a system by which the slave States are plundered for the benefit of those States which do not tolerate slavery.

To prove what I say of Great Britain to be true, I make the following extracts from the reports of commissioners appointed by Parliament, and published by order of the House of Commons. I can make but few and short ones. But similar quotations might be made to any extent, and I defy you to deny that these specimens exhibit the real condition of your operatives in every branch of your industry. There is a course of variety in their sufferings. But the same incredible amount of toil, frightful destitution, and utter want of morals, characterize the lot of every class of them.

Collieries.—"I wish to call the attention of the board to the pits about Brampton.—The seams are so thin that several of them have only two feet head-way to all the working. They are worked altogether by boys from 8 to 12 years of age, on all-fours, with a dog-belt and chain. The passages being neither ironed nor wooded and often an inch or two thick with mud. In Mr. Barnes' pit these poor boys have to drag the barrows with one cwt. of coal or slack 60 times a day 60 yards, and the empty barrows back, without once straightening their backs, unless they choose to stand under the shaft and run the risk of having their heads broken by a falling coal."—*Rep. on Mines*, 1842, p. 71. "In Shropshire the seams are no more than 18 or 20 inches."—*Ibid*, p. 67. "At the Booth pit," says Mr. Scriven, "I walked, rode, and crept 1800 yards to one of the nearest faces."—*Ibid.* "Chokedamp," "Firedam," "Wild fire," "Sulphur," and "Water" at all times menaced instant death to the laborers in these mines." "*Robert North*, aged 16: Went into the pit at 7 years of age, to fill up skips. I drew about 12 months. When I drew by the girdle and chain my skin was broken, and the blood ran down. I durst not say anything. If we said anything the butty, and the revee who works under him, would take a stick and beat us."—*Ibid.* "The usual punishment for theft is to place the culprit's head between the legs of one of the biggest boys, and each boy in the pit—sometimes there are 20—inflicts 12 lashes on the back and rump with a cat."—*Ibid.* "Instances occur in which children are taken into these mines to work as early as 4 years of age, sometimes at 5, not unfrequently at 6 and 7, while from 8 to 9 is the ordinary age at which these employments commence."—*Ibid.* The wages paid at these mines is from $2.50 to $7.50 per month for laborers, according to age and ability, and out of this they must support themselves. They work 12 hours a day.—*Ibid.*

In *Calico printing* it is by no means uncommon in all the districts for children 5 or 6 years old to be kept 14 to 16 hours consecutively."—*Rep. on Children*, 1842, p. 59.

I could furnish extracts similar to these in regard to every branch of your manufactures, but I will not multiply them. Every body knows that your operatives habitually labor from 12 to 16 hours, men, women, and children, and the men occasionally 20 hours per day. In lace-making says the last quoted report, children sometimes commence work at 2 years of age.

Destitution.—It is stated by your commissioners that 40.000 persons in Liverpool, and 15.000 in Manchester, live in cellars; while 22,000 in England pass the night in barns, tents or the open air. "There have been found such occurrences as 7, 8, and 10 persons in one cottage. I cannot say for one day, but for whole days, without a morsel of food. They have remained on their bed of straw for two successive days, under the impression that in a recumbent posture the pangs of hunger were less felt."—*Lord Brougham's speech, 11th July*, 1842. A volume of frightful scenes might be quoted to corroborate the inferences to be necessarily drawn from the facts here stated. I will not add more, but pass on to the important inquiry as to

Morals and Education.—"*Elizabeth Barrett*, aged 14: I always work without stockings, shoes or trowsers. I wear nothing but a shift. I have to go up to the headings with the men. *They are all naked there.* I am got used to that."—*Report on Mines.* "As to illicit sexual intercourse it seems to prevail universally and from an early period of life." "The evidence might have been doubted which attest the early commencement of sexual and promiscuous among boys and girls." "A lower condition of morals in the fullest sense of the term could not I think be found. I do not mean by this that there are many more prominent vices among them, but that moral feelings and sentiments do not exist. *They have no morals.*" "Their appearance, manners and moral natures—so far as the word moral can be applied to them—are in accordance with their half civilized condition." *Rep. on Children.* "More than half a dozen instances occurred in Manchester, where a man, his wife, and his wife's grown up sister, habitually occupied the same bed."—*Rep. on Sanitary Condition.* "Robert Cruchillow, aged 16: I don't know anything of Moses—never heard of France. I don't know what America is. Never heard of Scotland, or Ireland. Can't tell how many weeks there are in a year. There are 12 pence in a shilling, and 20 shillings in a pound. There are eight pints in a gallon of ale."—*Rep. on Mines.* "Ann Eggly, aged 18: I walk about and get fresh air on Sundays. I never go to church or chapel. I never heard of Christ at all."—*Ibid.* Others: "The Lord sent Adam and Eve on earth to save sinners." "I don't know who made the world, I never heard about God." "I don't know Jesus Christ—I never saw him; but I have seen Foster who prays about him." Employer: "You have expressed surprise at Thomas Mitchel's not hearing of God. I judge there are few colliers hereabout that have."—*Ibid.* I will quote no more. It is shocking beyond endurance to turn over your *Records* in which the condition of your laboring classes is but too faithfully depicted. Could our slaves but see it, they would join us in Lynching abolitionists, which, by the bye, they would not now be loath to do. We never think of imposing on them such labor, either in amount or kind. We never put them to *any work* under ten, more generally at twelve years of age, and then the very lightest. Destitution is absolutely unknown—never did a slave starve in America; while in moral sentiments and feelings, in religious information, and even in general intelligence, they are infinitely the superiors of your operatives. When you look around you, how dare you talk to us before the world of slavery? For the condition of your wretched laborers you, and every Briton who is not one of them, are responsible before God and man. If you are really humane, philanthropic and charitable, here are objects for you. Relieve them. Emancipate them. Raise them from the condition of brutes to the level of human beings—of American slaves at least. Do not for an instant suppose that the *name* of being freemen is the slightest comfort to them, situated as they are, or that the bombastic boast that "whoever touches British soil stands redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled," can meet with anything but the ridicule and contempt of mankind, while that soil swarms, both on and under its surface, with the most abject and degraded wretches that ever bowed beneath the oppressor's yoke.

I have said that slavery is an established and inevitable condition to human society. I do not speak of the *name*, but the *fact.* The Marquis of Normandy has lately declared your operatives to be *'in effect slaves.'* Can it be denied? Probably; for such philanthropists as your abolitionists care nothing for facts. They deal in terms and fictions. It is the word "slavery" which shocks their tender sensibilities; and their imaginations associate it with "hydras and chimeras dire." The thing itself in its most hideous reality, passes daily under their view unheeded—a familiar face, touching no chord of shame, sympathy or indignation. Yet so brutalizing is your iron bondage that the English operative is a bye word through the world. When favoring fortune enables him to escape his prison house, both in Europe and America he is shunned. With all the skill which 14 hours of daily labor from the tenderest age has ground into him, his discontent, which habit has made second nature, and his depraved propensities, running riot when freed from his wonted fetters, prevent his employment whenever it is not a matter of necessity. If we derived no other benefit from African slavery in the Southern States than that it deterred your *freemen* from coming hither, I should regard it as an inestimable blessing.

And how unaccountable is that philanthropy, which closes its eyes upon such a state of things as you have at home, and turns its blurred vision to our affairs beyond the Atlantic; meddling with matters which no way concern them—presiding, as you have lately done at meetings, to denounce the "iniquity of our laws" and "the atrocity of our practices," and to sympathise with infamous wretches imprisoned here for violating decrees promulgated both by God and man. Is this doing the work of "your Father which is in heaven," or is it seeking only "that you may have glory of man?"—Do you remember the denunciation of our Saviour, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees; Hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

But after all, supposing that every thing you say of slavery be true, and its abolition a matter of the last necessition, how do you expect to effect emancipation, and what do you calculate will be the result of its accomplishment? As to the means to be used, the Abolitionists, I believe, affect to differ, a large proportion of them pretending that their sole purpose is to apply "moral suasion" to the slaveholders themselves. As a matter of curiosity, I should like to know what their idea of this "moral suasion" is. Their discourses—yours is no exception—are all tirades, the exordium, argument and peroration, turning on the epithets "tyrants," "thieves," "murderers," addressed to us.—They revile us as "atrocious monsters," "violators of the laws of nature, God, and man," our homes the abode of every iniquity, our land a "brothel." We retort, that they are "incendiaries" and "assassins."—Delightful argument! Sweet, potent "moral suasion?" What slave has it freed—what proselyte can it ever make? But if your course was wholly different—if you distilled nectar from your lips, and discoursed sweetest music, could you reasonably indulge the hope of accomplishing your object by such means? Nay, supposing that we were all convinced, and thought of slavery precisely as you do, at what era of "moral suasion" do you imagine you could prevail on us to give up a thousand millions of dollars in the value of our slaves, and a thousand millions of dollars more in the depreciation of our lands, in consequence of the want of laborers to cultivate them?—Consider: were ever any people, civilized or savage; persuaded by any argument, human or divine, to surrender voluntarily two thousand millions of dollars? Would you think of asking five millions of Englishmen to contribute either at once or gradually four hundred and fifty millions of pounds sterling to the cause of philanthropy, even if the purpose to be accomplished was not of doubtful goodness? If you are prepared to undertake such a scheme, try it at home. Collect your fund, purchase our slaves, and do with them as you like. Be all the glory yours, fairly and honestly won. But you see the absurdity of such an idea: Away then with your pretended "moral suasion." You know it is mere nonsense. The Abolitionists have no faith in it themselves.—Those who expect to accomplish anything count on means altogether different. They aim first to alarm us; that failing, to compel us by force to emancipate our slaves, at our own risk and cost. To these purposes they obviously direct all their energies. Our northern liberty men have endeavored to disseminate their destructive doctrines among our slaves, and excite them to insurrection. But we have put an end to that, and stricken terror into them. They dare not show their faces here. Then they declared they would dissolve the Union. Let them do it. The North would repent it far more than the South. We are not alarmed at the idea. We are well content to give up the Union sooner than sacrifice two thousand millions of dollars, and with them all the rights we prize. You may take it for granted that it is impossible to persuade or alarm us into emancipation, or to making the first step towards it. Nothing then, is left to try, but sheer force. If the Abolitionists are prepared to expend their own treasure and shed their own blood as freely as they ask us to do, let them come. We do not court the conflict; but we will not and we cannot shrink from it. If they are not ready to go so far; as I expect, if their philanthropy recoils from it: if they are looking only for cheap glory, let them turn their thoughts elsewhere, and leave us in peace. Be the sin, the danger, and the evil of slavery all our own. We compel, we ask none to share them with us.

I am well aware that a notable scheme has been set on foot to achieve abolition by making what is by courtesy called "free" labor so much cheaper than slave labor as to force the abandonment of the latter.—Though we are beginning to *manufacture with slaves.* I do not think you will attempt to pinch your operatives closer in Great Britain. You cannot curtail the rags with which they vainly attempt to cover their nakedness, nor reduce the porridge which barely, and not always, keeps those who have employment from perishing of famine. When you can do this, we will consider whether our slaves may not dispense with a pound or two of bacon per week, or a few garments annually. Your aim, however, is to cheapen labor in the tropics. The idea of doing this by exporting your "bold yeomanry" is I presume given up. Cromwell tried it when he *sold* the captured followers of Charles into *West Indian slavery*, where they speedily found graves. Nor have your recent experiments on British and even Dutch constitutions succeeded better. Have you still faith in carrying thither your Coolies from Hindostan? Doubtless that once wild robber race, whose highest eulogium was that they did not murder merely for the love of blood, have been tamed down, and are perhaps "keen for immigration," for since your civilization has reached it, plunder has grown scarce in Guzerat. But this is the result of the experiment thus far? Have the Coolies, ceasing to handle arms, learned to handle spades, and proved hardy and profitable laborers? On the contrary, broken in spirit and stricken with disease at home, the wretched victims whom you have hitherto kidnapped for a bounty, confined in depots, put under hatches and carried across the ocean, forced into "voluntary immigration," have done little but lie down and die on the *pseudo* soil of freedom. At the end of five years, two-thirds, in some colonies a larger

Continued on fourth page.